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Date of mailing (day/month/year) 24 May 2000 (24.05.00)	To: in its capacity as elected Office
International application No. PCT/GB99/03439	Applicant's or agent's file reference DCM/GW/CB/P10099PC
International filing date (day/month/year) 18 October 1999 (18.10.99)	Priority date (day/month/year) 21 October 1998 (21.10.98)
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1. The designated Office is hereby notified of its election made:

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11 May 2000 (11.05.00)

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PCTWORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁷ :	A2	(11) International Publication Number:	WO 00/23249
B29C 47/00, 47/10, 55/28, B01D 71/10, C08B 1/00, C08J 5/18		(43) International Publication Date:	27 April 2000 (27.04.00)

(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB99/03439

(22) International Filing Date: 18 October 1999 (18.10.99)

(30) Priority Data:

9823080.8	21 October 1998 (21.10.98)	GB
9823081.6	21 October 1998 (21.10.98)	GB
9823083.2	21 October 1998 (21.10.98)	GB
9823085.7	21 October 1998 (21.10.98)	GB

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(54) Title: CELLULOSE EXTRUSION

(57) Abstract

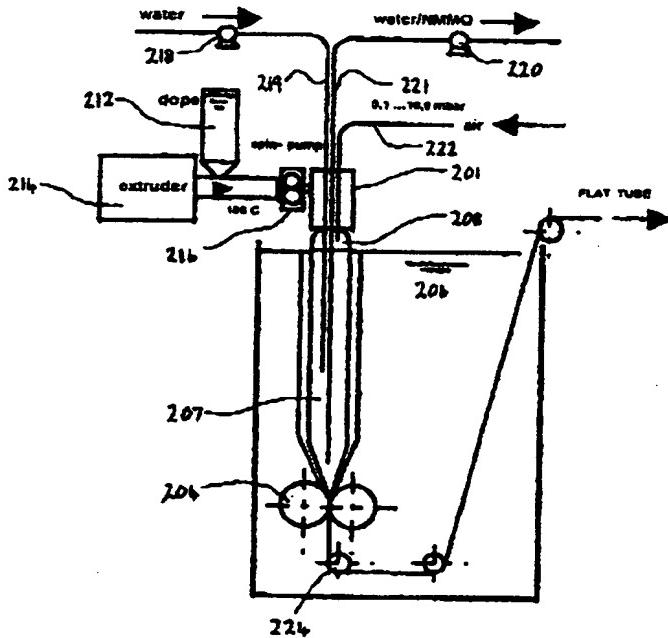
A process and apparatus used in cellulose extrusion is disclosed. In particular, the process discloses using an inert gas blanket above a cellulose solution wherein the inert gas blanket reduces any undesirable colour variations in the extruded product. Furthermore, the apparatus discloses draw means positioned downstream of the extrusion means to continuously draw the extruded cellulose film from the extrusion means. Apparatus is also disclosed wherein a tubular member is used to receive an extruded blown tube. The product formed using the process and apparatus described herein which has a substantially uniform distribution of fine pores throughout its cross-section is also discussed.

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(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published

Without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report.



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09/830044

JC02 Rec'd PCT/PTO 20 APR 2001

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CELLULOSE EXTRUSION

This invention relates to a process and apparatus used in cellulose extrusion and the obtained product, i.e. extruded cellulose film in, for example, sheet or tubular form.

The process relates to extruding a solution of cellulose, water and an amine oxide according to the well-known amine oxide extrusion process. In particular, the process relates to the reduction or avoidance of degradation or discolouration of the extruded cellulose solution, which otherwise leads to poor product quality.

The apparatus also relates to the avoidance of variations in thickness and edge wrinkling of the extruded film.

The apparatus is also suitable for use in extrusion of a blown film into a precipitation medium.

The invention also relates to an extruded cellulose product having a novel structure.

The production of extruded cellulose articles, such as fibres, sheets or tubes has been known for more than a century. In this so-called "viscose" process, cellulose is derivatised with carbon disulphide and solubilised in diluted sodium hydroxide to form a solution and the solution is extruded. The extruded cellulose is then regenerated and reverts to its solid form. The viscose process has been used for the manufacture of sausage casings, flat cellophane films, rayon fibres, bottle caps etc. A disadvantage of the viscose process is that it employs carbon disulphide as an intermediate, which is environmentally undesirable.

More recently, the so-called "amine-oxide" process has been developed wherein the cellulose is dissolved in a mixture of water and an amine-oxide solvent. A commonly used amine-oxide solvent is the tertiary amine-oxide NMMO (N-methyl morpholine N-oxide). This solvent is able to dissolve cellulose without having to first derivatise the

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cellulose, as for example in the viscose process. Once solubilised the cellulose will precipitate from the solution as a regenerated cellulose product by contacting the solution with a precipitation liquid which is a non-solvent for cellulose and a solvent for NMMO. The most frequently used precipitation liquid for the amine-oxide process is water. Prior to extrusion, the cellulose amine-oxide solution may be heated to a temperature of around 100°C. Thermal stabilisers, such as propylgalate, may be added to the solution to inhibit the thermal degradation of NMMO.

It has now been surprisingly found that using the amine-oxide process, extruded cellulose films having novel structure and enhanced mechanical properties may be obtained.

Furthermore, it has been found when extruding cellulose films, that the extruded material was coloured brown-red. Moreover, the colour intensity varied between different extrusion runs in an apparently uncontrolled manner. Colour variation could even be observed during a single long extrusion run.

In the extrusion step of the amine-oxide process when used to produce tubular casings (for use, for example in the food industry), the tube is extruded into a bath of precipitation liquid. The precipitation liquid is also maintained within the extruded tube so as to solidify the cellulose from the inside. A slight positive pressure of air may be maintained above the precipitation liquid within the extruded tube so as to expand the tube in the transverse direction (ie. transverse to the machine extrusion direction). The presence of precipitation liquid within the extruded cellulose tube causes process difficulties after the tube emerges from the precipitation bath, since it is necessary to cut the tube at regular intervals in order to allow the liquid to drain away. Failure to do so, leads to undesirable stretching of the tube and variations in diameter and thickness.

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It is an object of the present invention to mitigate these problems.

According to a first aspect of the present invention there is provided a process for extruding a solution of cellulose, water and an amine-oxide, which comprises

- 5 - providing a closed vessel containing said cellulose solution;
- 10 - providing an inert gas blanket above the cellulose solution in the vessel; and
- 15 - delivering the cellulose solution to an extrusion means for extrusion thereof.

Thus, it has been surprisingly found that protecting the stored cellulose solution from oxidation by the provision of an inert gas blanket substantially mitigates 15 against undesirable colour variations in the extruded product. Generally, the inert gas is nitrogen but other inert gases capable of protecting against oxidation might also be used.

20 The cellulose solution for extrusion comprises water and an amine-oxide. Suitable amine-oxides are known in the art and are particularly tertiary amine-oxides, such as NMMO (N-methyl morpholine N-oxide). Generally, cellulose pulp is mixed with an aqueous amine-oxide solution containing about 50% NMMO. The cellulose is unable to 25 dissolve at such high water content. The water is then removed from the mixture by applying heat and reduced pressure. Typically, the pressure is set so the water boils off at approximately 70°C and the vapours are removed and recovered by re-condensation. Once the water content 30 has been reduced from about 50% to about 12%, the NMMO mono hydrate is formed and the cellulose dissolves therein. The temperature is then typically increased to around 95°C to completely dissolve all the cellulose fibres. The reduced pressure is maintained or increased in order to remove any 35 remaining air bubbles from the cellulose solution. This solution is then suitable for extrusion.

The solution may be extruded directly or stored for

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prolonged periods without detrimental effects. Furthermore, the solution may be solidified by decreasing the temperature (from around 100°C) to allow the solution to solidify and then ground to form pellets.

5 The cellulose solution ready for extrusion is stored in the closed vessel, which enables a blanket of inert gas to be maintained in the free space above the cellulose solution. The inert gas may be slightly pressurised in order to reduce ingress of air from outside the vessel, 10 which might lead to deterioration of the stored cellulose solution. The use of a positive pressure of inert gas may also be of assistance in delivering the cellulose solution to the extrusion means.

15 The cellulose solution is extruded via the extrusion means into any desired shape, such as flat sheets or tubes. The process is particularly applicable to the production of wrappings or tubular casings for sausages, salami or other cased food products. The cellulose casing may be either used during the production of the food product and removed 20 thereafter or may be retained in place.

According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided an apparatus for the production of extruded cellulose film, which comprises

- 25 - extrusion means for continuously extruding a cellulose solution to form a cellulose film;
- precipitation means for solidifying the extruded cellulose film; and
- draw means positioned downstream of the extrusion means for continuously drawing the extruded cellulose 30 film from the extrusion means.

Thus, it has surprisingly been found that providing a positive transport mechanism in the form of draw means to continuously draw the extruded film away from the extrusion means gives good control over the thickness of the extruded 35 film.

The cellulose solution for extrusion may be a viscose solution or an amine-oxide solution, according to known

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technology.

The extrusion means generally comprise an extrusion die shaped to extrude a cellulose film of desired shape and dimensions. In particular, the film may be in the form of a flat sheet or may alternatively be in the form of a tube. Flat cellulose sheets are used in the food industry for wrapping food products. Cellulose tubes are used to encase food products, such as sausages, salami or other cased food products. As mentioned above, particular problems arise with the production of tubular cellulose products, since it is necessary to maintain a volume of precipitation liquid within the tube to assist solidification thereof.

According to a preferred feature of the second aspect of the present invention, when the extruded cellulose film is tubular the draw means in the form of a pair nip rollers which draw the flattened tube away from the extrusion means. Preferably, the nip rolls act to hold the sides of the tube together to form a seal to retain the precipitation liquid in a fixed volume defined between the extrusion means and the draw means. This avoids carry over of liquid downstream and thus minimizes the need to cut the extruded cellulose tube at regular intervals to release carried over liquid. This represents a saving in materials and also in labour costs.

In order to facilitate flattening of the tube prior to the draw means (eg. the nip rollers) it is preferred to provide collapsing means for collapsing the tube from its tubular form towards a flattened form. The collapsing means may be in the form of opposed non-parallel guide plates having a decreasing spacing towards the draw means, typically at an angle of 10 to 35°, preferably 15 to 25°.

In a particular embodiment, the draw means and the collapsing means are combined into a single unit in the form of a pair of opposed non-parallel moving belts which are spaced at an end where the extruded tube enters and come closer progressively towards a nip at the draw means. The moving belts have the benefit of positively

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transporting the extruded tube through the collapsing means and into the draw means.

Where the collapsing means are stationary, they will generally be coated with a low friction material, such as PVDF. Where the collapsing means are in the form of a moving belt, a belt such as a rubber belt having a suitable surface roughness for transporting the cellulose tube will be chosen.

It is found that the presence of the collapsing means helps to avoid wrinkling of the edges of the flattened tube.

The precipitation means generally comprises a liquid. The liquid may be present in a bath or may be showered onto the extruded film. In the case of the amine-oxide process, the precipitation liquid is generally water or dilute aqueous amine-oxide solution.

The draw means is generally in the form of a pair of nip rollers having a surface formed of a material having appropriate frictional qualities for gently gripping the extruded film without damaging it. The draw means may be driven at a speed which is slightly faster (for example 10 to 250% faster) than the speed of the extrusion means in order to expand the extruded cellulose film in the longitudinal machine direction.

The present invention also relates to a corresponding process for the production of extruded cellulose film.

The present invention when applied to the production of extruded cellulose tube allows the maintenance of a fixed internal volume of precipitation liquid downstream of the extrusion means and the prevention of liquid carry over. It also enables the production of uniform flat tube of a constant wall thickness.

According to a third aspect of the present invention there is provided apparatus for use in extrusion of a blown film into a precipitation medium, the apparatus comprising a tubular member for containing precipitation medium and for receiving an extruded blown tube.

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According to a fourth aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of extruding blown film, the method comprising:

5 extruding material through a die to form a tube;
maintaining the tube interior at a positive pressure;
and

passing the tube through a precipitation medium contained within a tubular member.

10 The aspects of the invention are useful in extrusion operations where a material, such as a cellulose\N-Methyl Morpholine N-Oxide (NMMO) melt solution, is extruded into a precipitation medium, which in the case of a cellulose/NMMO solution is water or aqueous NMMO solution, where the melt solution precipitates, typically to a solid
15 semi-gel state.

20 The tubular member may serve a number of useful functions: the member may be utilised to guide the extruded tube through the precipitation medium; and the member protects the extruded tube from disturbances in the precipitation medium. As a result, it has been found that the presence of such a tubular member improves the uniformity of the tube wall thickness.

25 Preferably, the extruded material is a mixture of cellulose in tertiary amine-oxide, such as N-Methyl Morpholine N-Oxide (NMMO) as discussed above.

Preferably also, the inner diameter of the tubular member is between 1.05 and 1.5 times the outer diameter of the extruded tube.

30 The precipitation medium will typically be provided as a bath of liquid, with the precipitation liquid present both inside and surrounding the tube, and it is preferred that the tubular member is at least partially immersed in the liquid.

35 Preferably also, an air gap is provided between the extrusion die and the bath of precipitation liquid, and by providing a positive pressure in the air gap within the extruded tube a blowing up or inflation of the tube

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results. Conveniently, this is achieved by introducing pressurised air into the air gap within the tube.

Preferably also, the extruded tube moves downwardly through the tubular member. Most preferably, the tubular member is vertically oriented.

Preferably also, the tubular member is transparent, permitting the extruded tube to be viewed as it passes through the member.

The tubular member may have a solid wall, or may have a perforated or discontinuous wall.

Preferably also, the precipitation medium flows, preferably axially, between the extruded tube and the tubular member.

Preferably also, following precipitation, the extruded tube is flattened by pick-up members, typically pick-up rollers, and the tubular member is profiled to guide the extruded tube to the pick-up members.

According to a fifth aspect of the present invention there is provided an extruded cellulose product, such as a film or fibre, having a substantially uniform distribution of fine pores throughout its cross-sections.

The fine porous structure obtained is quite distinct from the structure found in cellulose films produced according to the viscose process. In the viscose process, a cross-section through the extruded film shows a relatively few large pores and these pores tend to be elongate with an aspect ratio in excess of 5 to 1. Generally, the pores are elliptical in cross-section. In contrast, the pore structure of the cellulose films of the present invention is quite different and shows a widespread distribution of fine pores substantially evenly distributed throughout the cross-section of the film. The pores tend to be somewhat irregular in shape but the aspect ratio tends to be less than 5 to 1 (e.g. in the range 1:1 - 1:5). This is believed to give rise to improved mechanical properties.

As determined by electron microscopy, the pore size of

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the extruded film varies dependent on whether the film has never been dried, is dried, or has been dried and rewetted. Surprisingly, the pore size tends to vary more markedly depending on these parameters than does the pore size of cellulose films produced from the conventional viscose process. In particular, it is found that the pore size of extruded never-dried cellulose film tends to lie in the region 10-500nm whereas the pore size of the dried film tends to lie in the region 5-50nm as determined by electron microscopy. In contrast, the spindle-like or elliptical voids of the viscose process tend to have a minor dimension of 5-150nm and a major dimension of 300-750nm.

Comparative pore dimensions have also been investigated using small angle X-ray (SAXS) techniques as described herein. It is noted that the pore volume of dried film tends to lie in the region 0.04-0.05% volume fraction (compared to 0.25 for the viscose process) the pore volume for rewetted film tends to lie in the range 0.05-2% (compared to 0.11 for viscose material). The pore dimension of dried material tends to lie in the range 2.0-2.5nm (compared to 2.4 for the viscose process) and the pore dimension for rewetted material is in the range 3.2-3.7 (compared to 2.0 for the viscose process). The pore internal surface area of dried film lies in the range 0.7-1.0m²/cm³ (compared to 4.3m²/cm³ for the viscose process) and for rewetted film tends to be in the region 5-25m²/cm³ (compared to about 2 for the viscose process). Thus, the material of the present invention tends to exhibit a multiplicity of fine pores compared to a relatively small number of large pores in the viscose process.

It is found that there is increased permeability through the cellulose film of the present invention which is typically in the range 225-500mg μm ml/min cm² g (compared to a value of about 213 for the viscose process). The measurement methodology is given herein.

Finally, it is observed that the material of the present invention is less crystalline and exhibits a

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crystallinity typically in the range 35-42% (compared to the viscose process of 45%).

It is also observed that variations in the temperature of the precipitation bath (usually water or dilute NMNO solution) can lead to variations in the structure of the extruded cellulose film. In particular, higher temperatures (such as 20°C tend to favour large pore size, whereas lower temperatures (for example 10°C) tend to favour smaller pore sizes.

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram of a first embodiment of the invention showing a nitrogen blanket on top of melted dope in an extruder feeder hopper;

Figure 2 is a schematic view of a second embodiment of the invention for the production of cellulose tube and employing separate draw means and collapsing means;

Figure 3 is a schematic view of a third embodiment employing a combined draw means and collapsing means in the form of a pair of non-parallel moving belts;

Figure 4 is a schematic diagram of the overall extrusion process;

Figure 5 is an enlarged view of an area of Figure 4, and showing a tube-guiding pipe;

Figure 6 is a cross sectional morphology of never dried sample 7;

Figure 7 is the internal surface of sample 7;

Figure 8 is a cross sectional morphology of never dried sample 8;

Figure 9 is the internal surface of sample 8;

Figure 10 is a cross sectional morphology of never dried sample 14;

Figure 11 is the internal surface of sample 14;

Figure 12 is a cross sectional morphology of Lommel Standard code 023210, rewetted;

Figure 13 is the internal surface of Lommel Standard code 023210; and

Figure 14 shows an example of the pole values of sample 14.

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Figure 1 illustrates schematically apparatus for extruding a cellulose amine-oxide aqueous solution comprising a cellulose storage vessel 0 containing a cellulose amine-oxide solution 1 protected in the free space 2 above by a blanket of nitrogen at a slightly above-atmospheric pressure. The cellulose solution is fed to an extruder screw 5 driven by an extruder drive 4 and is then delivered by a gear pump 8 into an extrusion head 3. The cellulose amine-oxide solution is extruded in the form of a tube 6 via an air gap into a precipitation liquid 7 (for example water). The extruded tube is then finished in conventional manner.

Figure 2 shows schematically an extrusion means 101 including an extrusion die in annular form for extruding a cellulose tubular film 102 into a bath of precipitation liquid 106 via an air gap. In the case of an amine-oxide process, the cellulose solution for extrusion is a solution of cellulose and amine-oxide in water and the precipitation liquid is water or dilute amine-oxide solution. The extruded cellulose tube passes downwardly through the precipitation liquid until it encounters a collapsing device 103 in the form of a pair of opposed non-parallel plates coated with a low friction polymer (eg. PVDF). Each plate is inclined at an angle J of approximately 20° to the longitudinally machine direction (shown in a chain-dotted line). The collapsing means progressively collapses the tube into a flat form. The flattened tube is then drawn into the nip of a pair of rollers 104 which squeeze together the opposite sides of the flattened tube so as to form an effective seal and to supply sufficient pressure to the tube to maintain the extruded tube under a slight tension.

The distance H between the nip of the rollers and the initiation of collapsing of the tube walls can be varied experimentally until optimum results are achieved. Generally, the distance is in the region 10 to 100 centimetres.

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An amount 107 of precipitation liquid is also maintained inside the extruded cellulose tube by a means (shown in Figure 3) which maintains the level of liquid inside the tube approximately the same as that outside the tube and assists solidification of the interior of the extruded tube. An air space 108 is left above the precipitation liquid within the tube which is maintained at slightly above atmospheric pressure (eg. 0.1 to 10 mbar) to assist expansion of the extruded film in the transverse direction.

The effect of the nip rollers 104 is firstly to draw the extruded cellulose tube from the extrusion means thereby maintaining a slight tension in the tube which is found to minimise variations in thickness. Secondly, the nip rollers help define a closed volume of extrusion liquid 107 so that extrusion liquid is not carried further downstream with the cellulose film, which would otherwise necessitate cutting the film to release the liquid.

Figure 3 shows a further embodiment in which analogous parts are marked with the same reference numerals as in Figure 2. It differs from the embodiment shown in Figure 2 in that the function of the collapsing means and the roller draw means is combined in a pair of opposed non-parallel moving belt conveyors 105. Each conveyor comprises a belt 109 which passes around a nip roll 104 at one end and around an idler roll 110 of smaller diameter at the other end of its travel. The surface of the belts has an appropriate roughness for frictionally engaging and collapsing the tube walls before they are fed into the nip defined between the nip rollers 104. The internal run of each belt is inclined at an angle J of approximately 20° as before. The benefit of the moving belt conveyors is that the extruded cellulose film (which may still be somewhat delicate) is gently engaged by the moving conveyors and progressively fed into the nip of the rollers.

Figure 4 is an overall schematic diagram of the process and illustrates various processing conditions and

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Figure 5 is an enlarged view of Figure 4 showing guide rolls 224 which act as tube-guiding pipes. Dope (ie. cellulose-amine-oxide aqueous solution) at approximately 100°C is stored in storage vessel 212. It is transported
5 via extrusion device 214 and an extrusion screw through pump 216 to extruder 201 where the cellulose tube is extruded as described previously. A constant volume of water 207 is maintained in the space between the nip rolls 204 and the extruder by control means (not shown). Input
10 pump 218 and inlet line 219 together with outlet pump 20 and outlet line 211 continuously flush water through the contained volume 207. Clean water is introduced and a dilute solution of water and NMNO (in the case of a typical amine-oxide process) is discharged.

15 Similarly, a constant volume of air is maintained in the space 208 via a line 222 at a slightly supra-atmospheric pressure in the range 0.1 to 10.0mbar (for example 1mbar) to expand the tube transversely.

20 The extruded tube is collapsed and drawn down through nip rolls 204 as described previously and passes around a succession of guide rolls 224 within the water bath 206 to complete the cellulose solidification process. The flattened tube is then passed through a succession of water washing tanks (not shown) to remove any residual traces of
25 amine-oxide; before plasticiser is applied to the outside of the tube and the tube is reeled for storage.

30 In this way, water is prevented by the nip rolls from being carried downstream, thus avoiding the need to cut the tube at regular intervals to release trapped water, as in prior art processes. The process allows flat cellulose tube of tightly-controlled dimensions to be produced.

Example 1 - showing the use of an inert gas blanket

35 A cellulose solution for extrusion was prepared by mixing cellulose pulp with an aqueous NMNO solution containing about 50% by weight NMNO. Water was removed from the mixture by applying heat and a reduced pressure.

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The water boiled off at approximately 70°C and the vapours were recovered in a condensor. Once the water content had been reduced to about 12%, the NMMO monohydrate formed and the cellulose began to dissolve in the NMMO monohydrate solution. A stabiliser was added to the solution to inhibit thermal degradation of NMMO. The temperature was then increased to about 95°C and all the cellulose fibres dissolved to form an extrusion solution. The pressure was further reduced to remove air bubbles from the cellulose solution. At a temperature of about 100°C the cellulose solution is a visco-elastic melt with a high viscosity and a pronounced elastic behaviour. The time to produce the cellulose solution was about 3 hours.

The cellulose solution was then stored in a storage vessel such as shown in Figure 4 and extruded through an annular die so as to form a NMMO-cellulose tube. The tube was passed into a precipitation bath containing a precipitation medium, such as water or aqueous NMMO solution. A positive pressure is applied into the air gap between the extrusion die and the precipitation bath so as to keep the tube inflated up. The inner volume of the tube is also kept filled up with precipitation liquid, the composition of which is controlled to be constant.

In the absence of a nitrogen blanket above the cellulose solution in the storage vessel, it was frequently noticed that the extruded tube was coloured brown-red and that the colour intensity varied between different extrusion runs. Moreover, even during a single extrusion run of 20 minutes the colour changed from light-red at the beginning of the run to dark brown-red at the end. However, when a nitrogen blanket was employed in the storage vessel according to the present invention, the amount of discolouration was reduced. Moreover, the pressurised nitrogen enhanced filling of the extruder screw.

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Example 2 - showing details of the extruded cellulose product

A cellulose solution for extrusion was prepared by mixing cellulose pulp with an aqueous NMNO solution containing about 50% by weight NMNO. Water was removed from the mixture by applying heat and a reduced pressure. The water boiled off at approximately 70°C and the vapours were recovered in a condenser. Once the water content had been reduced to about 12%, the NMNO monohydrate formed and the cellulose began to dissolve in the NMNO monohydrate solution. A stabiliser was added to the solution to inhibit thermal degradation of NMNO. The temperature was then increased to about 95°C and all the cellulose fibres dissolved to form an extrusion solution. The pressure was further reduced to remove air bubbles from the cellulose solution. At a temperature about 100°C, the cellulose solution is a visco-elastic melt with a high viscosity and a pronounced elastic behaviour. Time to produce the cellulose solution was about 3 hours.

The cellulose solution was then stored in a storage vessel and extruded through an annular die so as to form a NMNO-cellulose tube. The tube was passed into a precipitation bath containing a precipitation medium, such as water or aqueous NMNO solution. A positive pressure was applied into the air gap between the extrusion die and the precipitation bath so as to keep the tube inflated. The inner volume of the tube was also kept filled up with precipitation liquid, the composition of which was controlled to be constant.

Measurements were carried out on the extruded film and photomicrographs thereof are shown in Figures 6 to 13. Figure 9 is an X-ray pole figure.

1. Transmission Electromicroscopy (TEM)

Transmission electromicroscopy was carried out according to well known procedures. The cross-sectional morphology of the NMNO casings is characterised by a

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network structure in which pores of varying size are embedded (see Figure 1). In general, the cross-sectional morphology can be divided into three zones, which do not have sharp boundaries and which tend to differ with respect to pore size and pore distribution, referred to as outer region, middle region and outer region. As a function of the processing conditions both symmetrical and asymmetrical morphologies can occur, as well as variations in dimensions of the regions and pore sizes (Table 1). It is also noted that precipitation bath temperatures have an effect on pore dimensions, lower temperatures (e.g. 10°C) giving generally smaller pores than higher temperatures (e.g. 20°C). This becomes evident by comparing Figures 6, 8 and 10 according to the present invention with Table 1 (viscose process for comparison). Reference to Table 1 also shows a comparison of cross-sectional morphologies of never-dried samples on the one hand and dried and rewetted samples on the other, which shows that the drying process causes irreversible changes in the pore size such that rewetting is not capable of re-establishing the original pore size of never dried samples.

The inner surface of the samples shows mainly an irregular network of aggregated fibrillar bundles without any preferred orientation (Figures 7, 9 and 11). The dimensions of the fibrillar bundles vary somewhat as a function of processing conditions, as does the surface roughness. The morphology of the viscose casings (Figures 12 and 13) by comparison is markedly different from those of the NMMO films of the present invention. Typical for the viscose casings is a symmetrical dense precipitation structure with immersed spindle-like voids, which are oriented in the machine direction of extrusion. Also, the surface structure of the viscose casings (Figure 13) is different from that of the NMMO films of the present invention. Characteristic of the viscose surfaces are micro and macro crazes as well as wrappings, preferentially oriented in the machine extrusion direction. Depending on

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processing conditions, variations of the pattern may occur.

2. X-Ray Texture Investigation

In order to determine the orientational state of the samples, pole figures were measured with an X-ray texture goniometer. The (1-10) and (110) pole figures were recorded in reflection and transmission geometries, respectively. Figure 14 shows an example of the (1-10) pole figure of Sample 14. From the half-width of the distribution curves obtained by cutting the pole figures in the machine (M) and transverse (T) directions the parameters of uniplanar orientation in the M-direction (O_{GM}) and in the transverse direction (O_{GT}) and the axial chain orientation parameters (O_{GA}) were determined. The results for the air-dried samples are summarised in Table 2.

It can be seen from Table 2 that, as a function of the processing conditions, the parameter of uniplanar orientation (O_{GM}) varies more strongly than (O_{GT}) in a transverse direction. The strongest variation is found for the axial chain orientation (O_{GA}). For the sake of comparison, the corresponding parameters for a viscose sample are also given.

3. Wide Angle X-Ray Defraction (WAXS)

WAXS investigations were performed in conventional manner with a wide angle X-ray diffractometer. From the corrected scattering curves of isotropised samples the degree of crystallinity (X_C) and the lattice distortion parameter (k) were calculated according to the Ruland-Vonk method. After peak separation, averaged lateral crystallite sizes (D_{hkl}) were determined from the half-width of the peaks with the help of the Scherrer equation. Results for the air-dried samples are summarised in Table 3. The variation in degree of crystallinity as a function of processing conditions is relatively low (36-41°) for the present cellulose film. On the other hand, the

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5 crystallinity of the conventional viscose casing is higher (about 45°). The lateral crystalline sizes do not show significant differences. Again, the values for the viscose sample are higher.

4. Small Angle X-Ray Investigations (SAXS)

10 SAXS investigations were performed using a Kratky camera with a position sensitive linear detector. According to the Porod scattering theory, from the corrected scattering curves in absolute units, the volume fraction (W_v) of the pores in colloidal dimensions, and a measure of the void diameter (I_v) (cord main intersection length) as well as the internal surface (O_{sp}) were calculated.

15 Table 4 shows the results of the SAXS investigations of dried and rewetted samples. It should be noted that the SAXS method records pores in colloidal dimensions (1 to about 100nm) only. Pore volume, average pore size and specific internal surface of the dried samples 3 and 4 do 20 not differ significantly. After storage of these samples in water and careful drying by means of a solvent exchange procedure, pore volume and internal surface increase dramatically. This is more the case for sample 4 than for sample 3. For comparison, the effect is not present in 25 viscose casings, and on the contrary pore volume and internal surface tend to decrease following such treatment.

Permeability

30 For selected samples from the experimental program, permeability measurements were carried out for which the results are shown in Table 5. Permeability is measured using a solution of $K_3Fe(CN)_6$. This shows that permeability for the NMMO casings of the present invention are higher than those for the comparison viscose casings.

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TABLE 1

Experiment	Precipitation bath temp. (°C)	cross-section	pore size (nm)			internal surface			bundle-dim. (nm)
			width of outer region (μm)	outer region	middle	outer region	orientation	profile	
1. never dried	20	asymmetrical	2.5...4	10...100	400...500	10...175			
1. dried	20	asymmetrical		5...45	5...45	5...150	none	embossed	15...70
2. never dried	10	symmetrical	2.5...3.5	10...60	10...100	10...60			
2. dried	10	symmetrical		5...30	5...30	5...50	none		
3. never dried	20	symmetrical	1.5...2.3	10...60	10...150	10...60			6.5...30
3. dried	20	symmetrical			5...30		none		
4. never dried	10	symmetrical	1.5...2.5	10...60	10...100	10...60			6.5...30
4. dried	10	symmetrical		5...30	5...25	5...30	none		
5. never dried	10	asymmetric	2.5	10...70	10...120	10...100			6.5...30
5. dried	10	asymmetric					none		
6. never dried	20	asymmetric	1.5...2.6	10...120	10...350	10...80			6.5...30
6. dried	20	asymmetric					none	embossed	15...70
7. never dried	10	asymmetric	2.0...4.0	10...60	10...60	10...200			
7. dried	10	asymmetric					none		
8. never dried	20	asymmetric	2.5...3.0	10...100	10...200	10...175			6.5...30
8. dried	20	asymmetric					none		
14. never dried	10	asymmetric	0.5...1.0	10...60	10...100	10...100			15...50
14. dried	10	asymmetric					none		
VISCOSE CASING		symmetrical					strong in M- direction	15...30	
							spindle-like voids a = 5...150, b = 300...750		w-shaped warpings, grooves

Results of electron microscopy

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TABLE 2

Orientational parameters from X-ray pole figure investigations

Sample dried	FWHM _M [degree]	Uniplanar OG _M	orientation FWHM _T [degree]	OG _T	Axial chain FWHM _A [degree]	orientat. OG _A
1	45.3	0.75	42.9	0.76	no orienta.	0
2	33.9	0.81	41.2	0.77	55	0.69
3	40.2	0.78	39.4	0.78	59	0.67
4	36.7	0.80	42.7	0.76	86	0.52
5	41.5	0.77	40.3	0.78	no orienta.	0
6	49.3	0.73	44.5	0.75	64	0.64
7	44.3	0.75	43.0	0.76	85	0.53
8	45.3	0.75	44.5	0.75	55	0.69
14	37.2	0.79	43.0	0.76	61	0.66
VISCOSE CASING	29.5	0.84	39.0	0.78	70	0.61

FWHM - full width at half maximum; M, T and A - machine, transverse and azimuthal directions; OG - orientational parameters

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TABLE 3

Degree of crystallinity and crystallite sizes of the air-dried samples as determined from X-ray investigations

Sample dried	x_c [%]	$k \cdot 10^3$ [nm ²]	$D_{(101)}$	$D_{(101)} [nm]$ $D_{(10-1)}$	$D_{(002)}$
V1	39	2.6	3.9	4.6	3.3
V2	41	2.3	3.9	4.3	3.1
V3	39	2.1	3.6	4.1	3.4
V4	39	2.5	3.6	4.2	3.3
V5	38	2.4	3.9	4.3	3.2
V6	37	2.5	3.7	4.3	3.5
V7	36	2.3	3.7	4.0	3.4
V8	41	2.2	3.6	4.3	3.4
V14	36	2.2	3.9	4.1	3.5
VISCOSE CASING	45	2.3	4.5	4.5	3.6

 x_c - degree of crystallinity, k - disorder parameter, D_{n0} - crystallite dimensions

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TABLE 4

Table contains the results of the SAXS investigations of the dried and rewetted samples. It should be considered that the SAXS method records pores in colloidal dimensions (1 to about 100 nm) only.

Sample	w, [%]	l, [nm]	O _{int} , [m ² /cm ³]
3, dried	0.04	2.4	0.8
3, rewetted	0.58	3.3	7.0
4, dried	0.05	2.1	0.9
4, rewetted	1.97	3.6	22.2
VISCOSE CASING DRIED	0.25	2.4	4.3
VISCOSE CASING REWETTED	0.11	2.0	2.0

w,- volume fraction of pores, l,- averaged pore dimensions, O_{int}- specific internal surface

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TABLE 5Permeability values of cellulose fibres (substance K₃Fe(CN)₆)

Experiment	permeation value (mg μm ml/(min cm ² g))
7	394
8	331
9	362
14	379
17	276
VISCOSE CASING	213

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CLAIMS

1. A process for extruding a solution of cellulose, water and an amine-oxide, which comprises

- 5 - providing a closed vessel containing said cellulose solution;
 - providing an inert gas blanket above the cellulose solution in the vessel; and
 - delivering the cellulose solution to an extrusion means for extrusion thereof.
- 10

2. Apparatus for the production of extruded blown cellulose film from a solution of cellulose, water and an amine-oxide, which comprises

- 15 - extrusion means for continuously extruding a cellulose solution to produce a cellulose film;
 - precipitation means for solidifying the extruded cellulose film;
 - draw means positioned downstream of the extrusion means for continuously drawing the extruded cellulose film from the extrusion means; and
20 - a tubular member for containing the precipitation means and for receiving an extruded blown tube.

3. A method of extruding blown film, the method comprising:

- 25 extruding material through a die to form a tube;
 maintaining the tube interior at a positive pressure;
 and
 passing the tube through a precipitation medium contained within a tubular member.

30 4. An extruded cellulose film having a substantially uniform distribution of fine pores throughout its cross-section.

5. A cellulosic film as in claim 4 produced by extruding a dissolved cellulose solution in N-Methyl Morpholine N-

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oxide monohydrate.

6. A cellulosic film as in claim 4 with a permeability in the range 225-500 mg μm ml/min cm^2g .

5 7. A cellulosic film as in claim 4 with a crystalline cellulose structure in the range 36-41% as measured with wide angle X-ray defraction.

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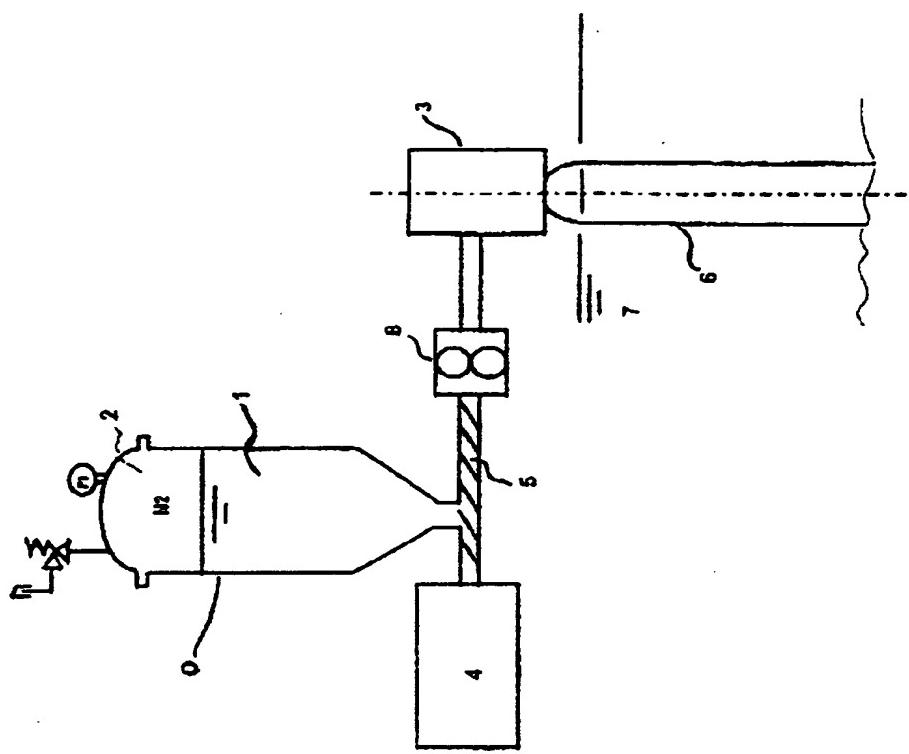


FIGURE 1 : NITROGEN BLANKET ON TOP OF MELTED DOPE IN EXTRUDER FEEDER HOPPER

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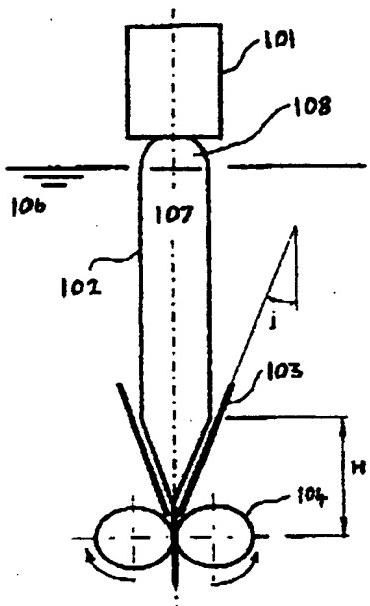


FIGURE 2: PLATE SLIDE COLLAPSORS AND BOTTOM SQUEEZE ROLLS

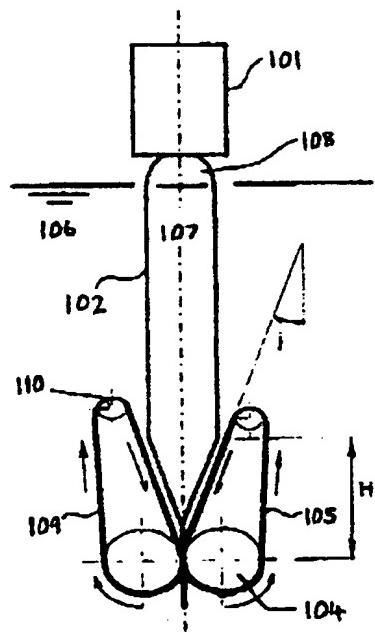


FIGURE 3: MOVING BELT COLLAPSORS COMBINED WITH BOTTOM SQUEEZE ROLLS

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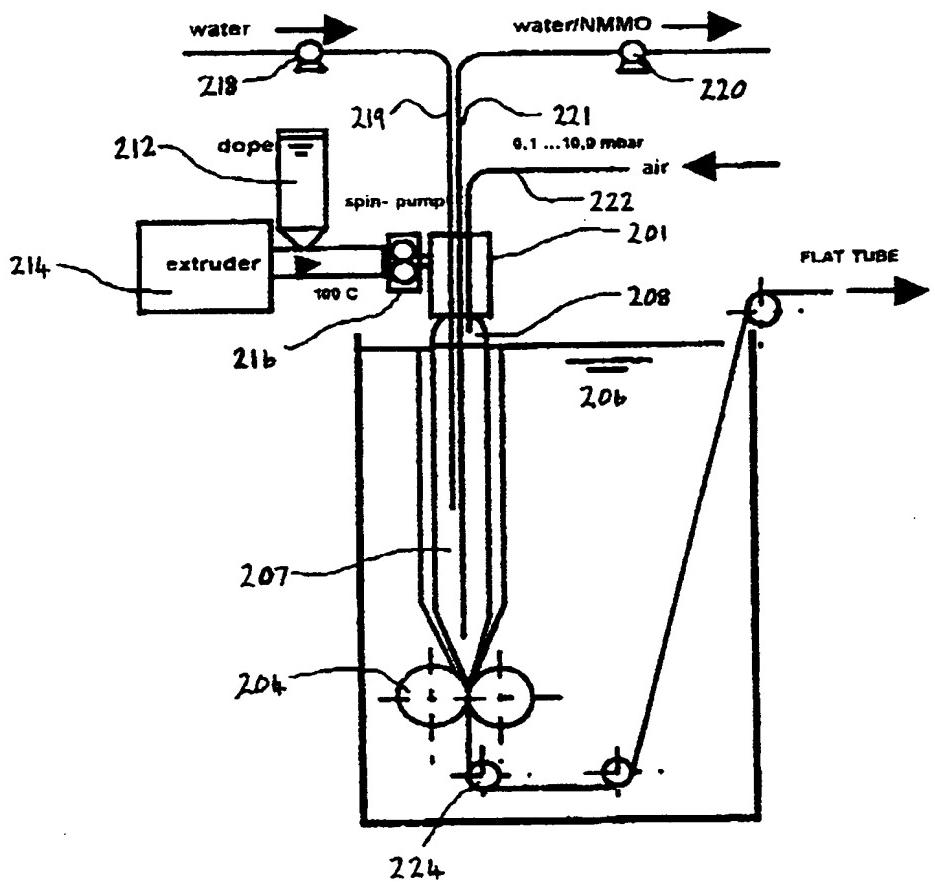


FIGURE 4

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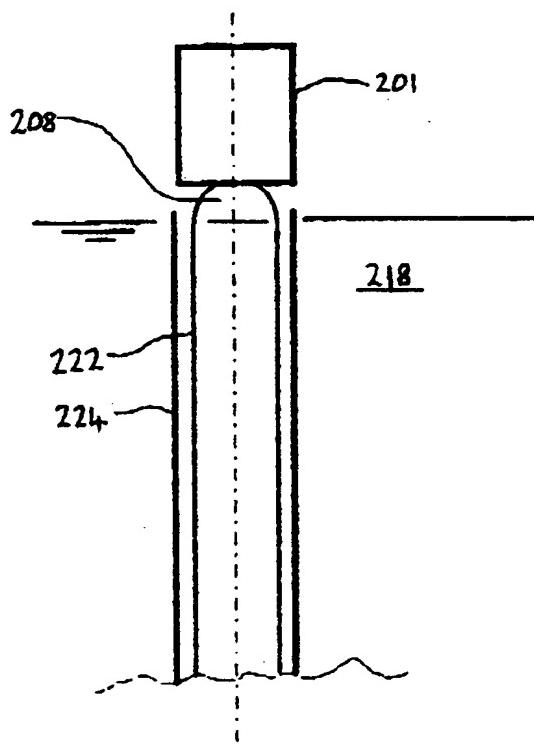


FIGURE 5

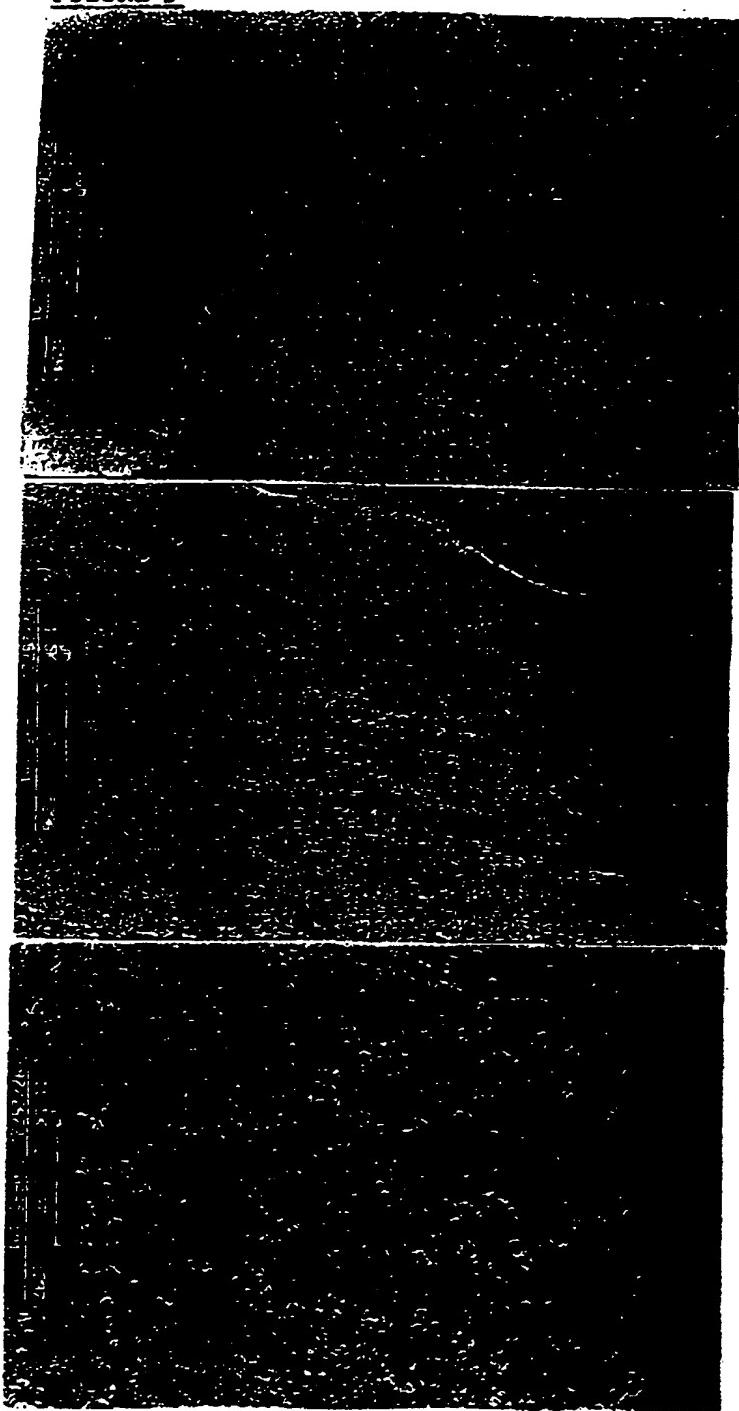
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FIGURE b

outer region

centre

outer region

Cross sectional morphology of never dried sample 7

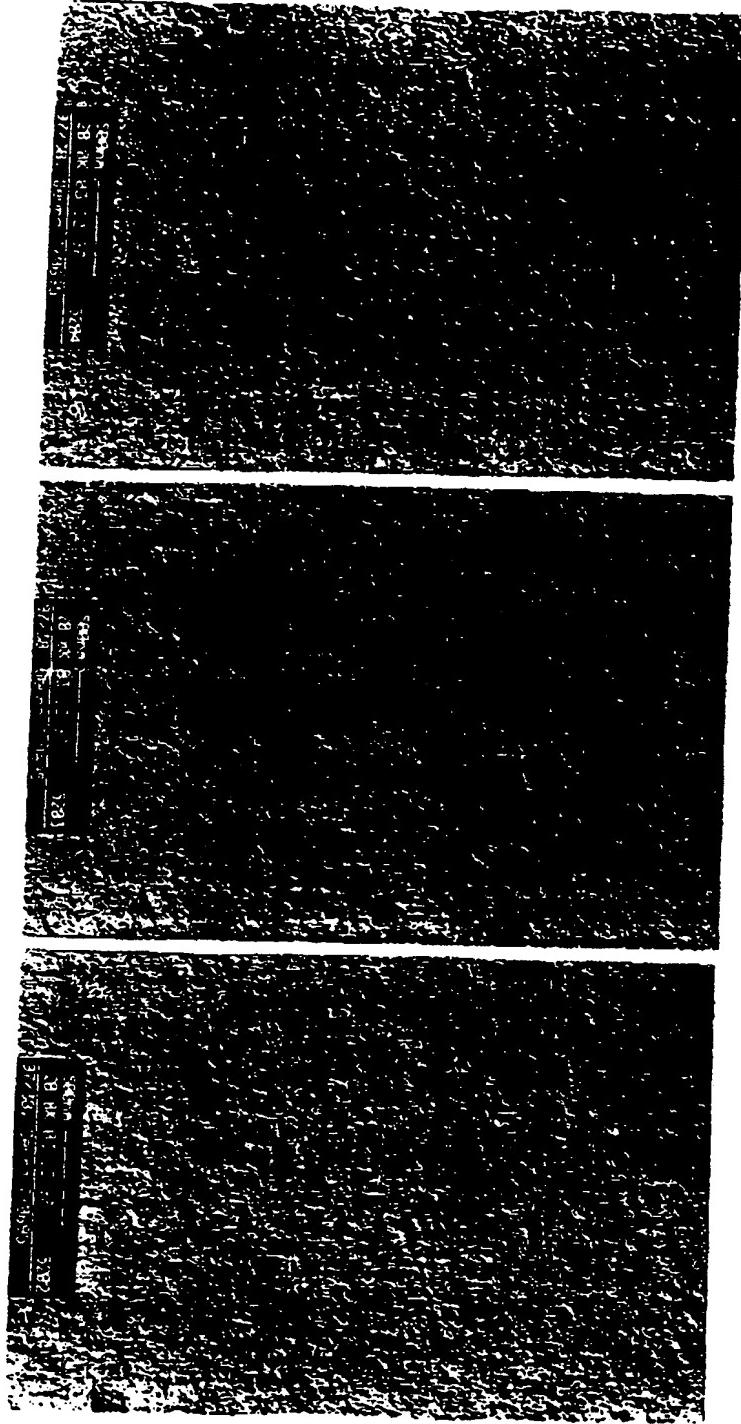
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FIGURE 7



Internal surface of sample 7

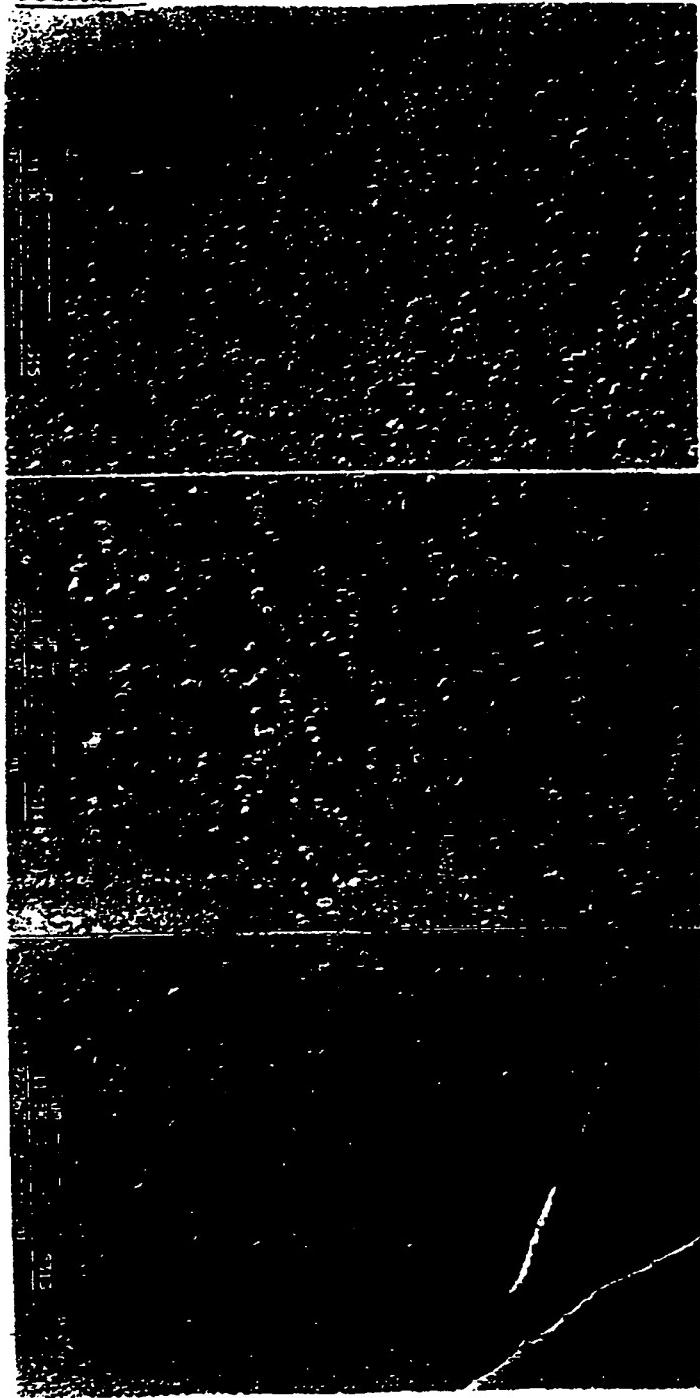
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FIGURE 8

Cross sectional morphology of never dried sample 8

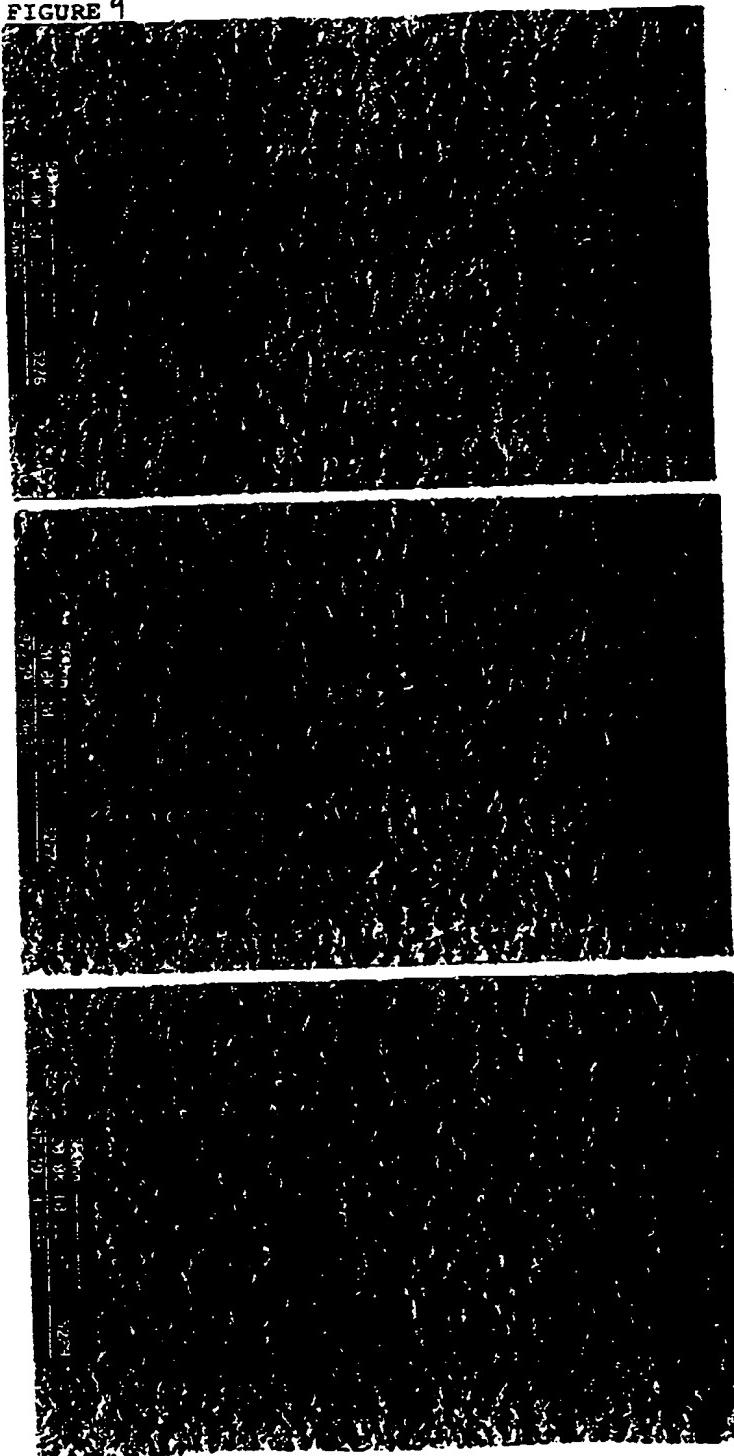
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FIGURE 9

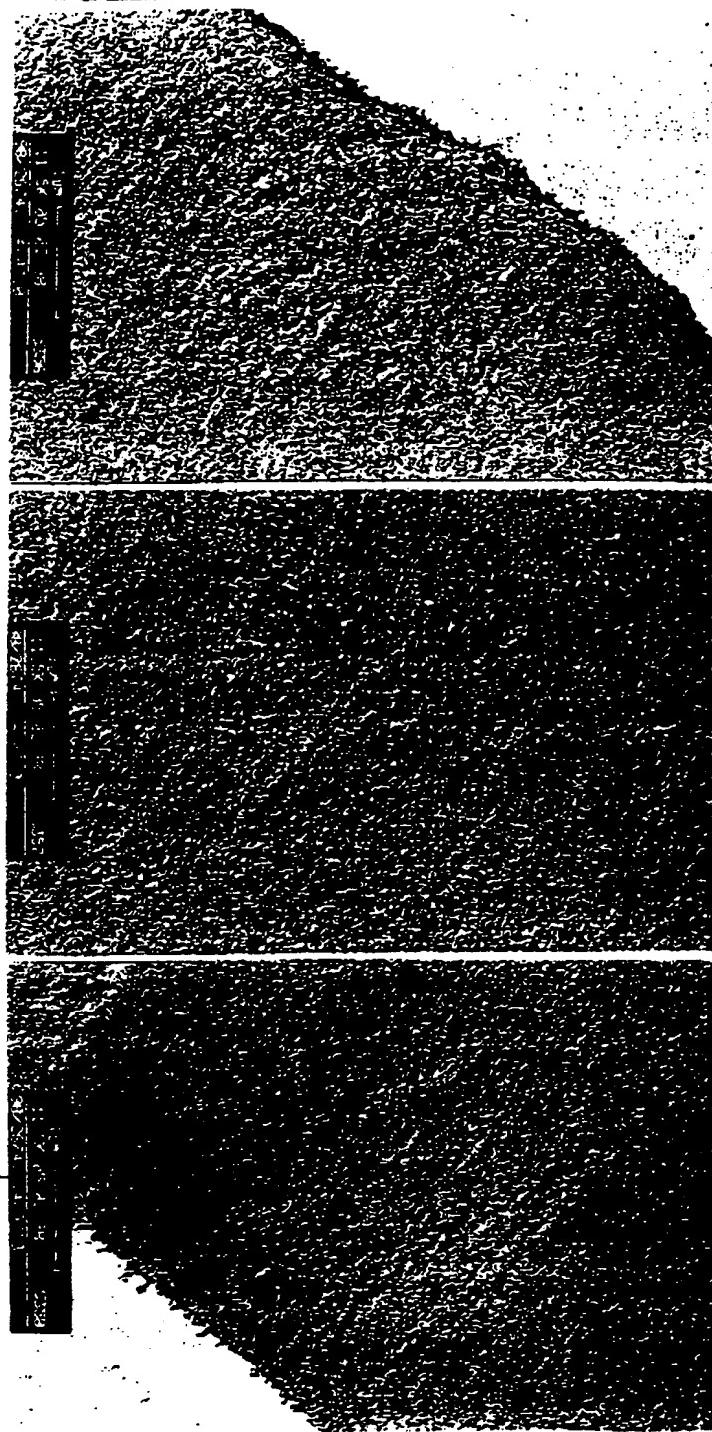


Internal surface of sample 8
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FIGURE 10

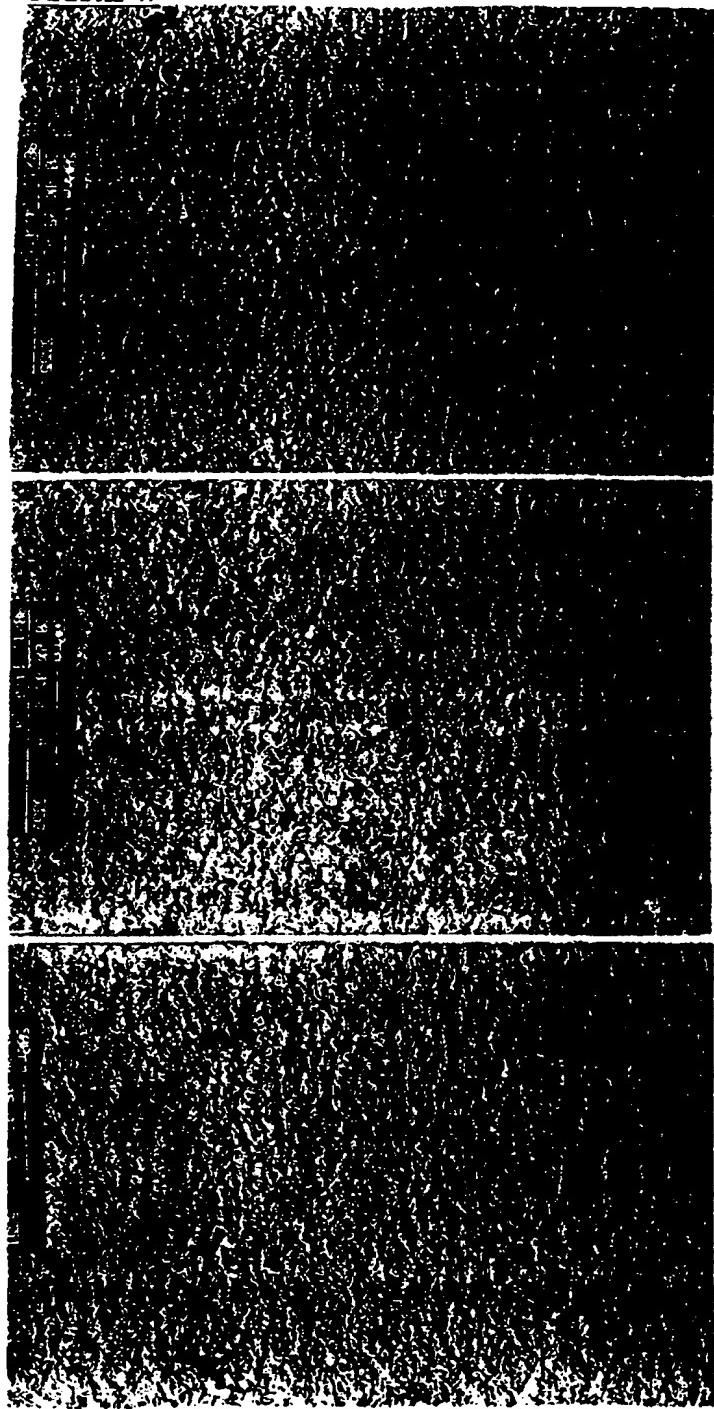
Cross sectional morphology of never dried sample 14

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FIGURE 11

Internal surface of sample 14

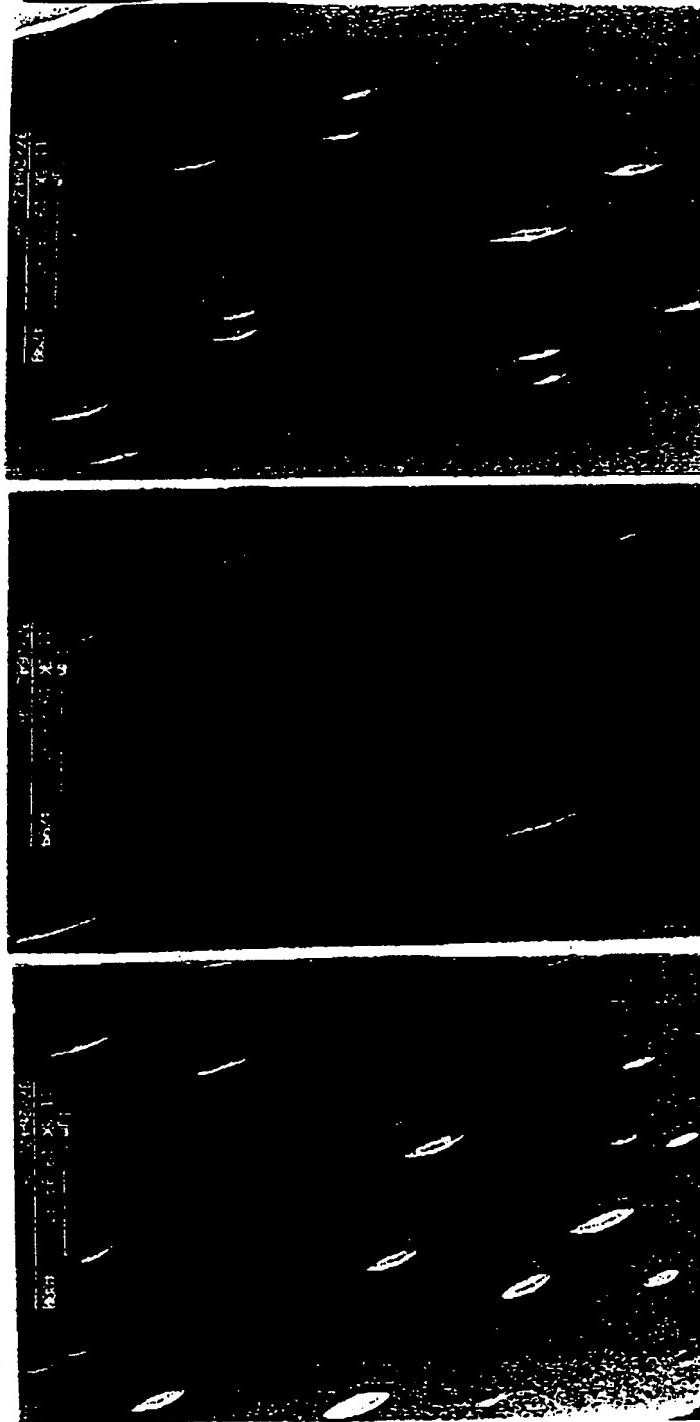
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FIGURE 12

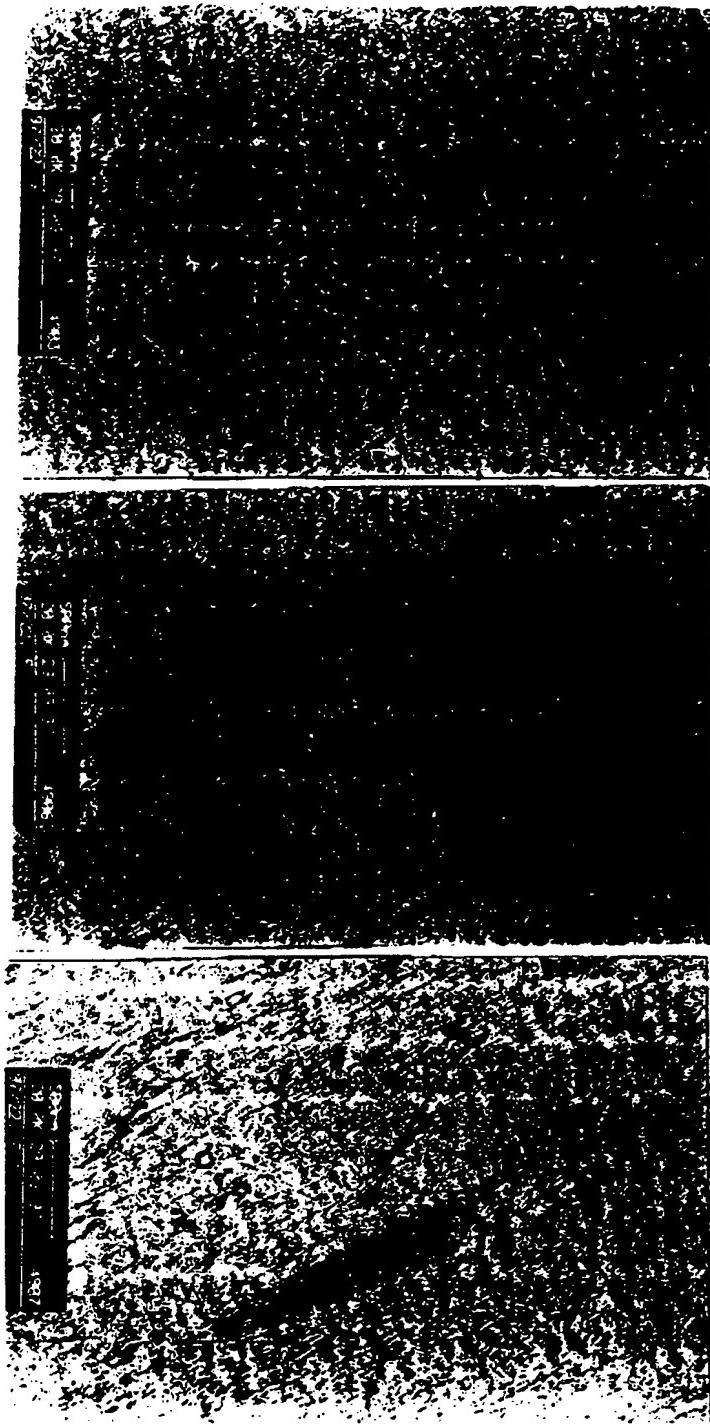
Cross sectional morphology of Lommel Standard code 02321a, rewetted

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FIGURE 13

Internal surface of Lommel Standard code 023210

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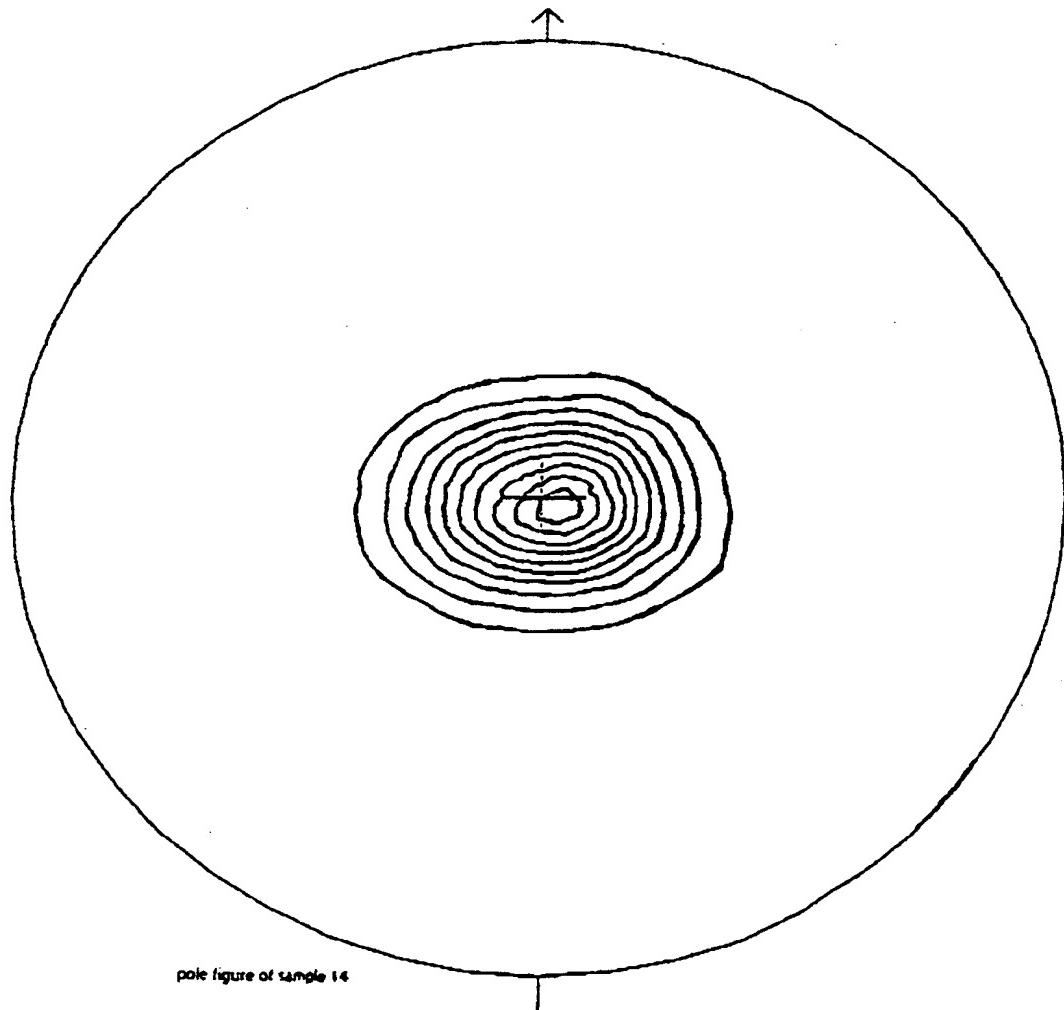
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FIGURE 14

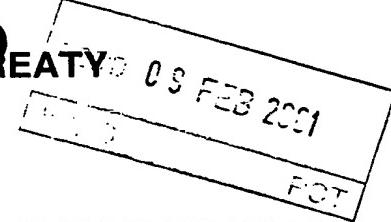
POLE FIGURE

0.50 1.00 1.50 2.00 2.50 3.00 3.50 4.00 4.50 5.00



PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT



INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference DCM/GW/CB/P10099PC	FOR FURTHER ACTION	See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)
International application No. PCT/GB99/03439	International filing date (day/month/year) 18/10/1999	Priority date (day/month/year) 21/10/1998
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC B29C47/00		
Applicant DEVRO PLC et al.		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.

2. This REPORT consists of a total of 7 sheets, including this cover sheet.

This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

These annexes consist of a total of sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

- I Basis of the report
- II Priority
- III Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
- IV Lack of unity of invention
- V Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement
- VI Certain documents cited
- VII Certain defects in the international application
- VIII Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 11/05/2000	Date of completion of this report 08.02.2001
Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority:  European Patent Office - P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk - Pays Bas Tel. +31 70 340 - 2040 Tx: 31 651 epo nl Fax: +31 70 340 - 3016	Authorized officer Van Nieuwenhuize, O Telephone No. +31 70 340 3435



**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/GB99/03439

I. Basis of the report

1. This report has been drawn on the basis of (*substitute sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to the report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17.)*):

Description, pages:

1-23 as originally filed

Claims, No.:

1-7 as originally filed

Drawings, sheets:

1/13-13/13 as originally filed

2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language: , which is:

- the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of the international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).
- the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).
- the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rule 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

- contained in the international application in written form.
- filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
- furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
- furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
- The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
- The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

4. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

- the description, pages:
- the claims, Nos.:

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/GB99/03439

the drawings, sheets:

5. This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)):

(Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.)

6. Additional observations, if necessary:

IV. Lack of unity of invention

1. In response to the invitation to restrict or pay additional fees the applicant has:

restricted the claims.
 paid additional fees.
 paid additional fees under protest.
 neither restricted nor paid additional fees.

2. This Authority found that the requirement of unity of invention is not complied and chose, according to Rule 68.1, not to invite the applicant to restrict or pay additional fees.

3. This Authority considers that the requirement of unity of invention in accordance with Rules 13.1, 13.2 and 13.3 is

complied with.
 not complied with for the following reasons:
see separate sheet

4. Consequently, the following parts of the international application were the subject of international preliminary examination in establishing this report:

all parts.
 the parts relating to claims Nos. 1.

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Statement

Novelty (N) Yes: Claims
 No: Claims 1

Inventive step (IS) Yes: Claims
 No: Claims 1

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/GB99/03439

Industrial applicability (IA) Yes: Claims 1
No: Claims

2. Citations and explanations
see separate sheet

VII. Certain defects in the international application

The following defects in the form or contents of the international application have been noted:
see separate sheet

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET

International application No. PCT/GB99/03439

Re Item IV

Lack of unity of invention

1. The separate groups of claimed inventions are:
 - (1) Claim 1 storing a solution of cellulose in amine-oxide and water under an inert gas blanket prior to extrusion
 - (2) Claims 2, 3 Method and apparatus for cellulose film blowing
 - (3) Claims 4 - 7 extruded porous cellulose film
 2. These groups are not so linked as to form a single general inventive concept (Rule 13.1 PCT) for the following reasons as already indicated by the International Searching Authority and set out in the invitation to restrict or to pay additional fees (PCT Article 34(3)(a) and Rule 68.2):
 - (1) The special technical feature of independent claim 1 over DE-A-4219658, cf. examples 5 and 6 is the provision of an inert gas blanket above the cellulose solution. The underlying problem is the prevention of thermal degradation, cf. page 2, line 9 - 11 and page 3, lines 1 and 2.
 - (2) Independent method claim 3 and apparatus claim 2 do not contain this special technical feature. The problem underlying independent claims 3 and 2 is to prevent undesirable stretching and variations in thickness and diameter, cf. page 2, line 36 and 37 and page 3, lines 1 and 2. Thus the claims 1 and claims 2, 3 do not have common special technical features while they solve different problems.

WO-A-9535340, cf. examples 1, 3, discloses a method of blowing cellulose film from which the subject-matter of both claims 2 and 3 differs in a tubular member containing the precipitation means, which is the special technical feature. The problem underlying independent claims 3 and 2 is to prevent

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

International application No. PCT/GB99/03439

undesirable stretching and variations in thickness and diameter, cf. page 2, line 36 and 37 and page 3, lines 1 and 2.

- (3) The special technical feature of claim 4 over WO-A-9535340 or DE-A-4219658 is a substantially uniform distribution of fine pores throughout the film's cross-section. Therefore claim 4 on one side and claims 1, 2 or 3 on the other side do not have common special technical features and have different underlying problems.

Re Item V

Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Reference is made to the following documents:

D1: US-A-4416698
D2: US-A-4196282

2. Documents D1 (cf. example 1, figure 1) and D2 (cf. example 2) both disclose a process for extruding a solution of cellulose, water and an amine-oxide, which comprises providing a closed vessel containing said cellulose solution, providing an inert gas blanket above the cellulose solution in the vessel, and delivering the cellulose solution to an extrusion means for extrusion thereof, for which reason the subject-matter of claim 1 lacks novelty.

Therefore claim 1 does not meet the requirements of Article 33(2) PCT.

Consequently claim 1 does not meet the requirements of Article 33(3) PCT.

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

International application No. PCT/GB99/03439

Re Item VII

Certain defects in the international application

1. The features of the claims should have been provided with reference signs placed in parentheses (Rule 6.2(b) PCT).

2. In order to meet the requirements of Rule 5.1(a)(ii) PCT, the relevant background art in respect of the subject-matter of claim 1, which is disclosed in the documents D1 and D2, should have been mentioned in the description, and these documents should be identified therein.



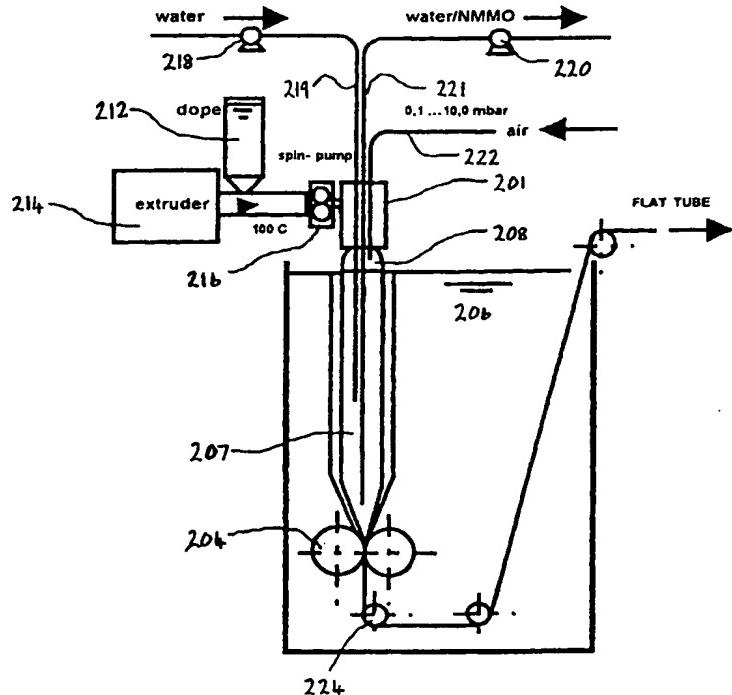
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 : B29C 47/00, 47/10, 55/28, B01D 71/10, C08B 1/00, C08J 5/18		A2	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/23249 (43) International Publication Date: 27 April 2000 (27.04.00)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB99/03439		(74) Agents: MCCALLUM, William, Potter et al.; Cruikshank & Fairweather, 19 Royal Exchange Square, Glasgow G1 3AE (GB).	
(22) International Filing Date: 18 October 1999 (18.10.99)		(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).	
(30) Priority Data: 9823080.8 21 October 1998 (21.10.98) GB 9823081.6 21 October 1998 (21.10.98) GB 9823083.2 21 October 1998 (21.10.98) GB 9823085.7 21 October 1998 (21.10.98) GB		(71) Applicants (for all designated States except US): DEVRO PLC [GB/GB]; Moddiesburn, Chryston, Glasgow G69 0JE (GB). FRAUNHOFER-GESELLSCHAFT ZUR FORDERUNG DER ANGEWANDTEN FORSCHUNG E.V. [DE/DE]; Leonrodstrasse 54, D-80636 Munich (DE).	
(72) Inventors; and (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): BECKERS, Stefan, D. [BE/BE]; Panovenstraat 19, B-3941 Hechtel-Eskel (BE). WEIGEL, Peter [DE/DE]; Seelenbinder 3B, D-14532 Kleinmachnow (DE). FINK, Hans-Peter [DE/DE]; Kiefernweg 7, D-74513 Teltow (DE). DOSZ, Michael [DE/DE]; Hildburghauser Strasse 191A, D-12209 Berlin (DE). PURZ, Hans-Joachim [DE/DE]; Mairenfelder Anger 30, D-14513 Teltow (DE).		Published Without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report.	
(54) Title: CELLULOSE EXTRUSION			
(57) Abstract			
<p>A process and apparatus used in cellulose extrusion is disclosed. In particular, the process discloses using an inert gas blanket above a cellulose solution wherein the inert gas blanket reduces any undesirable colour variations in the extruded product. Furthermore, the apparatus discloses draw means positioned downstream of the extrusion means to continuously draw the extruded cellulose film from the extrusion means. Apparatus is also disclosed wherein a tubular member is used to receive an extruded blown tube. The product formed using the process and apparatus described herein which has a substantially uniform distribution of fine pores throughout its cross-section is also discussed.</p>			



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(51) International Patent Classification 7 : B29C 47/00, 47/10, 55/28, B01D 71/10, C08B 1/00, C08J 5/18 // B29K 1:00	A3	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/23249 (43) International Publication Date: 27 April 2000 (27.04.00)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB99/03439		(74) Agents: MCCALLUM, William, Potter et al.; Cruikshank & Fairweather, 19 Royal Exchange Square, Glasgow G1 3AE (GB).
(22) International Filing Date: 18 October 1999 (18.10.99)		
(30) Priority Data: 9823080.8 21 October 1998 (21.10.98) GB 9823081.6 21 October 1998 (21.10.98) GB 9823083.2 21 October 1998 (21.10.98) GB 9823085.7 21 October 1998 (21.10.98) GB		(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).
(71) Applicants (<i>for all designated States except US</i>): DEVRO PLC [GB/GB]; Moddiesburn, Chryston, Glasgow G69 0JE (GB). FRAUNHOFER-GESELLSCHAFT ZÜR FORDERUNG DER ANGEWANDTEN FORSCHUNG E.V. [DE/DE]; Leonrodstrasse 54, D-80636 Munich (DE).		
(72) Inventors; and		
(75) Inventors/Applicants (<i>for US only</i>): BECKERS, Stefan, D. [BE/BE]; Panovenstraat 19, B-3941 Hechtel-Eskel (BE). WEIGEL, Peter [DE/DE]; Seelenbinder 3B, D-14532 Kleinmachnow (DE). FINK, Hans-Peter [DE/DE]; Kiefernweg 7, D-74513 Teltow (DE). DOSZ, Michael [DE/DE]; Hildburghauser Strasse 191A, D-12209 Berlin (DE). PURZ, Hans-Joachim [DE/DE]; Mairenfelder Anger 30, D-14513 Teltow (DE).		
(54) Title: CELLULOSE EXTRUSION		
(57) Abstract		
A process and apparatus used in cellulose extrusion is disclosed. In particular, the process discloses using an inert gas blanket above a cellulose solution wherein the inert gas blanket reduces any undesirable colour variations in the extruded product. Furthermore, the apparatus discloses draw means positioned downstream of the extrusion means to continuously draw the extruded cellulose film from the extrusion means. Apparatus is also disclosed wherein a tubular member is used to receive an extruded blown tube. The product formed using the process and apparatus described herein which has a substantially uniform distribution of fine pores throughout its cross-section is also discussed.		



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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

In: International Application No

PCT/GB 99/03439

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 B29C47/00 B29C47/10 B29C55/28 B01D71/10 C08B1/00
C08J5/18 //B29K1:00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 B29C C08B C08J B01D A22C

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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X	US 4 196 282 A (FRANKS NEAL E ET AL) 1 April 1980 (1980-04-01) column 8, line 50 - line 65; example 2 ---	1
X	EP 0 822 201 A (DAICEL CHEM) 4 February 1998 (1998-02-04) page 6, line 1 - line 14 ---	1
X	EP 0 807 460 A (AKZO NOBEL NV) 19 November 1997 (1997-11-19) claims 1,36 ---	4,5 -/-

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

12 May 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

06.06.00

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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X	US 3 853 448 A (YAZAWA M) 10 December 1974 (1974-12-10) claim 1; figure 1 ---	2,3
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C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/GB 99/03439

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This International Search Report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. Claims Nos.: because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. Claims Nos.: because they relate to parts of the International Application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful International Search can be carried out, specifically:

3. Claims Nos.: because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

see additional sheet

1. As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers all searchable claims.

2. As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.

3. As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

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Remark on Protest

- The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.
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FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

This International Searching Authority found multiple (groups of) inventions in this international application, as follows:

1. Claim : 1

storing a solution of cellulose in amine-oxide and water under an inert gas blanket prior to extrusion

2. Claims: 2, 3

Method and apparatus for cellulose film blowing

3. Claims: 4-7

extruded porous cellulose film

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/GB 99/03439

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Int'l Application No

PCT/GB 99/03439

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 18 and Rules 43 and 44)

Applicant's or agent's file reference DCM/GW/CB/P10099PC	FOR FURTHER ACTION see Notification of Transmittal of International Search Report (Form PCT/ISA/220) as well as, where applicable, item 5 below.	
International application No. PCT/GB 99/ 03439	International filing date (day/month/year) 18/10/1999	(Earliest) Priority Date (day/month/year) 21/10/1998
Applicant DEVRO PLC et al.		

This International Search Report has been prepared by this International Searching Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 18. A copy is being transmitted to the International Bureau.

This International Search Report consists of a total of **6** sheets.



It is also accompanied by a copy of each prior art document cited in this report.

1. Basis of the report

- a. With regard to the language, the international search was carried out on the basis of the international application in the language in which it was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.
 - the international search was carried out on the basis of a translation of the international application furnished to this Authority (Rule 23.1(b)).
- b. With regard to any nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence disclosed in the international application, the international search was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing :
 - contained in the international application in written form.
 - filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
 - furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
 - furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
 - the statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
 - the statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished
- 2. Certain claims were found unsearchable (See Box I).
- 3. Unity of invention is lacking (see Box II).

4. With regard to the title,

- the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.
- the text has been established by this Authority to read as follows:

5. With regard to the abstract,

- the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.
- the text has been established, according to Rule 38.2(b), by this Authority as it appears in Box III. The applicant may, within one month from the date of mailing of this international search report, submit comments to this Authority.

6. The figure of the drawings to be published with the abstract is Figure No.

- as suggested by the applicant.
- because the applicant failed to suggest a figure.
- because this figure better characterizes the invention.

4

- None of the figures.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/GB 99/03439

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This International Search Report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. Claims Nos.: because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. Claims Nos.: because they relate to parts of the International Application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful International Search can be carried out, specifically:

3. Claims Nos.: because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

see additional sheet

1. As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers all searchable claims.

2. As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.

3. As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

4. No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this International Search Report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

- The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.
- No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

This International Searching Authority found multiple (groups of) inventions in this international application, as follows:

1. Claim : 1

storing a solution of cellulose in amine-oxide and water under an inert gas blanket prior to extrusion

2. Claims: 2, 3

Method and apparatus for cellulose film blowing

3. Claims: 4-7

extruded porous cellulose film

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/GB 99/03439

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7	B29C47/00	B29C47/10	B29C55/28	B01D71/10	C08B1/00
	C08J5/18	//B29K1:00			

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 B29C C08B C08J B01D A22C

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 4 416 698 A (MCCORSLEY III CLARENCE C) 22 November 1983 (1983-11-22) figure 1; example 1 ---	1
X	US 4 196 282 A (FRANKS NEAL E ET AL) 1 April 1980 (1980-04-01) column 8, line 50 – line 65; example 2 ---	1
X	EP 0 822 201 A (DAICEL CHEM) 4 February 1998 (1998-02-04) page 6, line 1 – line 14 ---	1
X	EP 0 807 460 A (AKZO NOBEL NV) 19 November 1997 (1997-11-19) claims 1,36 ---	4,5 -/-

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

° Special categories of cited documents :

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

Date of mailing of the international search report

12 May 2000

05.06.00

Name and mailing address of the ISA

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Van Nieuwenhuize, O

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/GB 99/03439

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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X	US 3 853 448 A (YAZAWA M) 10 December 1974 (1974-12-10) claim 1; figure 1 ---	2, 3
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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